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MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA RED CROSS WAR COMMITTEES

HELD AT

THE HOTEL RITZ

PHILADELPHIA, MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1917

REMARKS

BY

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Of all the horrors of the present war, the greatest has undoubtedly been the inability of the Allies for months after the struggle began to furnish adequate medical treatment and supplies, proper food and sanitary accommodations for their wounded and sick. This chapter of unpreparedness is indescribably sad and indelibly discreditable.

During the first year of the struggle thousands upon thousands of the soldiers of the Allies died or were permanently maimed, diseased and incapacitated for life, solely because they did not receive proper or prompt medical attention and nursing, and were left without the most elementary comforts. The military authorities and the Red Cross societies found themselves woefuly lacking in equipment, facilities and supplies, in nurses and surgeons, in ambulances and beds, in buildings and tents to accommodate the wounded and sick, and were overwhelmed by the number they were called upon to

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care for. Innumerable were the instances of the wounded whose lives could and should have been saved and innumerable the instances of frightful and unnecessary pain and suffering endured by those whose every want should have been foreseen and provided for by the great and rich nations whose battle they were fighting.

I do not dare to trust myself in any attempt to describe the sickening details of this awful story—of the thousands who bled to death for want of medical attention, of the thousands whose wounds became infected for want of surgical dressings, of the men—our fellow human beings—whose feet were frozen and had to be amputated for want of proper footwear, of those whose arms or legs had to be amputated without anaesthetic, held down on the operating table by the nurses, of those who succumbed for lack of nursing, of those who suffered hours and hours and sometimes days before their excruciating agony could be relieved—all because the people for whom they were fighting had neglected to furnish the necessary attendance and supplies.

Now, after thirty-five months of the war, with all its horrible lessons and all its awful warnings, we, the richest and the most powerful nation in the world, find ourselves as unprepared as was England in August, 1914, when she sent her small but immortal army to Belgium to face ten times its number in order that the plighted faith of England to a small and weak nation might be kept inviolate.

The question before us to-day is whether we shall send our young men to fight for us on the battle-fields of Europe, three thousand miles away from home, without adequate preparation to save them from unnecessary suffering and pain and from needless death. It is as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow that if we Americans fail to respond to the present call of the Red Cross, our own soldiers will suffer and die who could be and should be saved from pain, from death, from disease, from mutilation.

After the horrible experiences in every war since the Crimea, after the warnings preached year in and year out by all Red Cross organizations throughout the world, after forty years of open preparation for aggressive war by the German Empire, it is hard to find excuses for the unpreparedness of the Allies, except perhaps that no one realized what fiendish and effective instruments of destruction brutalized science had developed. But after these thirty-five months of the example of suffering Europe, there will surely be no excuse if we Americans find ourselves unprepared, and our conduct will be reprehensible in the extreme if we neglect now for an hour longer to make the necessary preparations which, at any cost, should guarantee that not a single American shall suffer for want of medical treatment, proper food and sanitary accommodations.

This country of ours will, indeed, not be fit to live in and certainly not fit to fight or die for if we, with a popu-

lation of one hundred millions and rich and prosperous beyond the common allotment of Providence to men, shall now fail to respond to the call of the Red Cross War Council, and refuse to give it from our plenty adequate means to carry on its work.

In addition to the imperative duty to protect our own sons, comes the beseeching, heartrending call of humanity. On all the battle fronts, thousands of men are dying every day unnecessarily and are suffering unnecessarily from wounds, are becoming diseased and contracting tuberculosis and all the frightful ailments generated by war, unsanitary conditions and pestilence, and millions of men, women and children are hungry if not starving. We are called upon to help save their lives for the future. We are called upon to relieve and sustain these great civilized and lovable peoples of Europe, bound to us by so many ties. Shall we fold our arms and let them suffer and die because we refuse to give a fraction of what God has given us?

But we hear on all sides three questions, three chilling and sordid complaints. The first question is: Why did not the Red Cross wait a few weeks before making this appeal, and let the clamor and recollection of last week's campaign for the Liberty Loan become more or less dim? Why follow so soon upon that great appeal to the patriotism of the country? Why press the generosity of the people? We are told that the time is inop-

portune. The second question is: Why should not the army and navy take care of its own wounded and sick under competent and trained army doctors and orderlies and nurses? And the third question is: Why should not the funds be provided through taxation by Congress? When thousands of millions are being raised through government appropriation, it is urged, an extra hundred millions would not make much difference and would not be felt by anyone.

But the objectors wholly fail to recognize that the Liberty Loan called for no gift and no sacrifice. Every dollar will be returned with interest. Not a single cent of risk is involved in buying the best investment bond in the world. Every dollar subscribed could have been procured by taxation, but bond issues were fairer and more advantageous. The present appeal is the first call upon the Nation at large—upon every citizen of the Republic voluntarily to make some sacrifice for safeguarding our own sons and relieving the misery of countless human beings.

To the first question relating to the time being inopportune, let me briefly answer in the words of the Chairman of the Red Cross War Council, Mr. Davison. When urged to postpone the appeal, he answered: "If we wait, it may be too late." And Davison was right: no time is too early and no time could be inopportune to make this call upon the patriotism, charity and mercy

of America. The Allies waited; and it was too late for thousands of their soldiers, and thousands upon thousands of their civilians. We Americans waited when the Civil War broke out, and thousands of our soldiers died unnecessarily or had to go through life maimed and diseased because we were unprepared and remained unprepared until private citizens organized the famous United States Sanitary Commission under the leadership of Dr. Bellows. During the Spanish-American War we again waited until it was too late, as shown by the record of thousands of our men unnecessarily dying or contracting incurable diseases in Cuba and at our military camps, on Long Island, at Chickamauga and at Santiago. We have now waited for nearly three years when we might have been preparing, and if we wait any longer it may be too late for hundreds, if not thousands, of our own sons.

Indeed, it seems to me that, if anything, this appeal should have preceded the Liberty Loan, vital as that loan was. Mr. Davison and his colleagues are absolutely right when they declare that no time is to be lost, and that it would be utterly indefensible and callously reckless to wait a day longer.

The second question inquires why the government should not do the work which the Red Cross does if only in connection with the care of the military wounded and sick. The answer is that the universal experience, in time

of war, is that supplementary aid, relief and service from voluntary sources is indispensable. Every war for a century has demonstrated the inability or incapacity of military or other government officials to do this relief work. Experience has repeatedly shown that such work is best handled by civilian organizations. This has been the consensus of opinion after thorough investigation at all the International Red Cross Conventions since 1863. And this was the experience in our own Civil War and Spanish-American War. Moreover, the work of the Red Cross is essentially one of sentiment, of charity, and of mercy, which somehow cannot be satisfactorily done in great emergencies and cataclysms by bureaucrats or functionaries. It calls for a lofty humanitarian spirit and altruistic service and a special uplifting enthusiasm which money cannot buy; it requires a sympathy which salaries cannot secure. No money compensation could possibly have enlisted the splendid talents, the executive and financial genius, the self-sacrificing spirit and high enthusiasm of a Davison and his associates. I wish I had the time to pay them the tribute of thanks, admiration and gratitude the country owes them for all they are doing. And, if they succeed, and I believe they will—for they must or we would despair of the future—if they succeed in their comprehensive and far-reaching plans, they will do much towards winning the war and bringing about a just and lasting peace. But above all they will add immeasurably to the prestige and grandeur of this great, loyal, generous, beloved country of ours.

The third objection that meets us on all sides is that the funds for the Red Cross work could readily have been raised by means of taxation or the issue of bonds.

A sufficient answer to this complaint should be that the President and Congress, after full consideration, have otherwise determined and have said that the funds for the Red Cross should be supplied voluntarily by the people of the country. They, our representatives, have referred the whole duty and burden to us, the American people, as properly a matter to be left to voluntary action—leaving to us the extent of the relief which we shall contribute voluntarily out of our plenty, leaving it to us to show whether we are so selfish and callous as to refuse to make any sacrifices unless wrung from us by taxation. As yet we have made no sacrifices—certainly not in taking bonds and thereby making a safe investment. I believe that the decision of Congress was wise and right.

The work of the Red Cross is a service of mercy to our own people and to humanity, and it should not be made the subject of compulsory taxation. The people at large should be appealed to and should all have an opportunity of showing their voluntary patriotism and sympathy by contributing even if it be a mite to this field of relief and charity. Taxation, by means of an income tax, would only reach a very small percentage of the population of the United States. The Red Cross War Council hopes that the fund they seek will be contributed by at least ten million Americans, and they would infinitely

prefer to have one hundred thousand subscriptions of ten dollars each than one subscription of one million dollars. They want to be able to go to all those whom they relieve and comfort and save, and say: "This is the willing and loving gift of millions of American citizens and not what has been wrung from them by taxation; it is from the people home who are back of our soldiers at the front." This will afford an immense although subtle and indefinable joy and comfort to suffering soldiers who receive help so sweetened and thus twice blessed, blessing him that gives and him that takes!

How proud we Americans will be, what a splendid page we shall write in the history of humanity, how high we shall stand in true national glory and grandeur if the result of this appeal shall be to proclaim to the world that the people of this great free self-governing Republic have voluntarily given $100,000,000 to help the suffering and afflicted, to protect the helpless and feed the starving!

It is said that we cannot add a cubit to our stature by taking thought, but surely we shall add many a cubit to our stature as a nation if we can record to the honor and glory of this generation and of Christianity that we raised the largest sum ever even thought possible in the history of the world for this great work of charity and mercy.

But the Red Cross, if adequately supplied and equipped, should also from the material side be regarded as a

practical auxiliary to the fighting force and as rendering the army doubly efficient and effective. A French officer told me recently that in many instances during the past three years the offensive of the French and British armies in France had to be checked or stopped because of the great number of the wounded who could not be taken care of and were dying for want of medical attendance, nurses and equipment. He declared that it would have been inhuman to lead men into battle under such conditions. Hence, those who think only of prompt and complete victory at any cost of human life and suffering should appreciate that the way to render the army effective and to assure victory is to enlist and equip the Red Cross as the indispensable auxiliary of the fighting force, and give it the means to relieve the army of the care of the wounded and sick and thus afford it a free hand for its work.

May I take a few minutes more of your time while I review the situation that confronts us in this war?

We are facing the greatest crisis and the most barbarous warfare since the overthrow of the Roman Empire. The issue is again between civilization and barbarism—between conscience and brutalized militarism. Never before has so much been at stake materially and spiritually; never before have men's souls been tried as they have been and will be tried in this war; never before have the services and leadership of educated and disciplined men and women been so essential. Modern

civilization must be saved from the domination of conscienceless and merciless brute force; and the hope of accomplishing this result now rests upon the efforts, the services and the sacrifices of the American people. It seems, in truth, that America's heroic day has come, when she is to find her fuller and broader and nobler life and fulfill her highest mission. If Americans are found wanting in the stupendous task and patriotic duty ahead of them, mankind may have to suffer centuries of misery equal to the misery of what are known to us as the Dark Ages.

We should bear in mind that the advanced stage of progress and civilization attained by the Romans was completely overthrown by barbarous militarism, and that the peace and prosperity that then reigned under just and equal laws, the literature and arts that flourished, the splendid system of jurisprudence that had been developed, and the growth of the moral instinct that was beginning to soften manners and uplift and dignify manhood, were all submerged in the triumph of barbarism. We must not forget that a thousand years of desolation, misery and darkness followed the fall of Rome, and that the renaissance of manners, literature, arts and jurisprudence which produced our modern civilization, dates only from the fifteenth century. Nor should we fail to realize and ponder that conscienceless and brutalized science and soulless, materialistic education have become the accomplices of modern barbarism and have devised

means and instruments of frightful power which have rendered war infinitely more destructive, inhuman and merciless than anything recorded of the barbarians of the days of Attila.

It is of paramount importance that the American people should appreciate the real issue that is now being fought out on the battlefields of Europe and on the high seas—what is really at stake in defense of which our President has nobly pledged all that we are and all that we have—what would be the stupendous and ruinous consequences of defeat to America and Europe, and should realize that if we fail the future will certainly be one of military domination, of brutal barbarism, of misery and decline. Especially important is it that the young men whom we are calling upon to dedicate themselves to patriotic service and sacrifice should thoroughly understand why we and our allies must be prepared to make sacrifices of blood and treasure unparalleled in history in order to assure the final triumph of the right and the future security of our civilization.

Nothing could be more dangerous or more likely to undermine the spirit and stamina and chill the enthusiasm of the country than to permit any doubt to prevail as to the causes of our participation in this war and the necessity for the great sacrifices which we must willingly make. We should banish all catch phrases and euphemisms, which tend to blind and mislead many and can do incalculable mischief when taken apart from their con-

text, and which sooner or later will come back to plague us. We have not plunged into this frightful struggle in support of any political propaganda or abstract theories. We have not gone to war in order to force democracy upon other peoples, for we recognize the right of other peoples to choose their own form of government. That is of the essence of our Declaration of Independence. We are not at war with autocracy as a form of government, but with manifestations of its results. If a dictatorship were to be established in Russia to-morrow in order to save the country from anarchy, we would continue to co-operate with her as an ally; and the overthrow of autocracy in Germany would not change the issue at all so long as the German people were bent upon brutal conquest, oppression and domination, and approved, as they now do, the barbarous methods and merciless atrocities of their military forces. Let us never forget that the German people acclaimed the sinking of the "Lusitania"!

We have drawn the sword to avenge atrocities and wrongs to which no self-respecting nation could longer submit. We have gone to war because hundreds of American citizens, defenseless men, women and children entitled to the full protection of the American flag, have been barbarously and defiantly murdered on the high seas—because our national honor, duty and self-respect compel us to punish the offenders so that hereafter no nation, however powerful, shall dare to take the life of an American—because the army which at-

tacked and brutally devastated peaceful Belgium would constitute a menace to us if it triumphed and went unpunished in Europe. We have joined the Allies because the barbarians who have deliberately and mercilessly ruined everything in their march, even more completely than the savage Huns of old, who have ruthlessly slaughtered defenseless non-combatants, who have wantonly destroyed private property and desecrated and ruined the cathedrals and churches of Belgium and France, who have murdered unoffending priests and outraged holy nuns, have made Europe and the world at large unsafe for Americans as well as for all other civilized peoples. It is primarily to make the world safe for Americans to live and travel in that we are now at war. We have determined to put an end to the danger of our own people being subjected to the brutal oppression and unspeakable atrocities of German barbarism. We are fighting and sacrificing for the maintenance and safety of civilized life according to our American ideals. We are determined to compel the observance by the German people of the just rules of international law and of the humane laws of war which recognize the rights of neutrals and of weak and defenseless non-combatants, because we deem those rules and those laws vital to the future protection and happiness of our own people and vital to our own independence and welfare as a nation.

Whilst we are thus engaged in the war to redress our own wrongs and to protect the vital interests of Ameri-

cans, we are also fighting and sacrificing for the still higher purpose of suppressing fiendish barbarism once for all time and of perpetuating those standards of civilization and humanity which we cherish and want to see prevail in the community of nations. In a word, in fighting to redress our own wrongs, we are at the same time fighting for liberty and humanity the world over.

Finally, it seems to me that you would not want a spokesman of the Red Cross War Council to allow this memorable occasion to pass without some recognition, however inadequate, of the cooperation of the women of Philadelphia, who have always been so patriotic and charitable, and who are certain to respond to any call for the relief and prevention of suffering, pain and misery. Indeed, the field of the Red Cross is in large measure the peculiar province of women; and without them now there would be little hope of success, for they must be relied on not only to help raise the needed funds, but to secure the necessary nurses and to prepare indispensable supplies.

We should never forget that the inspiration of the Red Cross—of that great volunteer army of mercy which has done so much good in the past and which is destined to do so much more good in the immediate future—sprang from the example of heroism and devotion of women sixty years ago on the bloody battle-fields of the Crimea—sprang into life from the splendid service of the noble British women under Florence Nightingale

who nursed the British sick and wounded, and from the holy Catholic nuns who nursed the French sick and wounded during that awful war. Then, as history tells us, thousands of the best of the manhood of England and France suffered frightful pain and died miserably because their governments had failed to provide for the work which the American Red Cross proposes to do in this war, and thousands were saved from death and from being permanently maimed or diseased by the nursing of these noble and heroic women.

The wounded and sick British soldiers far away from home, cruelly suffering through the long nights, called Florence Nightingale, as she passed from bed to bed and room to room, "The Lady of the Lamp," and she and her assistants were known as the "Angel Band"—angels of mercy!

You may recall that our own poet Longfellow dedicated to Miss Nightingale a poem entitled "Santa Filomena"—the English word nightingale being filomena in Italian. May I ask your further patience while I read two stanzas from that poem?

"On England's annals, through the long
Hereafter of her speech and song,
That light its rays shall cast
From portals of the past.

"A Lady with a Lamp shall stand
In the great history of the land,
A noble type of good,
Heroic womanhood."

We Americans confidently believe that on the honor roll of this great war and its record of lives saved, of suffering relieved, of bereavement comforted, of sorrow alleviated, of starving fed, the Recording Angel in Heaven will inscribe the names of innumerable American women bearing the ennobling badge of the Red Cross, whose heroism and self-sacrifice will be quite beyond the poor power of human words to express, but who will stand in the history of our land as examples to future generations of the noblest type of good, heroic, self-sacrificing American womanhood, which is the pride and glory of our day and generation.

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